

**County Durham Economic Partnership
Senior Advisory Panel
Monday 21 May 2007, 9.30am
St Hild and Bede College**

MINUTES

Attendees

Bob Hope (Chair)	Wear Valley District Council
Linda Edworthy (Secretariat)	DCC/CDEP
Graham Young	DDC/CDEP
Tarryn Lloyd Payne	DCC/CDEP
Richard Smith	DCC/CDEP
Joanne Willey	DCC/CDEP
John McCreadie	EKOS Consulting
David Eiser	Shared Intelligence
Richard Horniman	Sedgefield Borough Council
Julie Underwood	SASDA
Peter McDowell	Derwentside District Council
Elaine Richardson	South Tyne and Wear Valley Job Centre Plus
Richard Prisk	District of Easington
Sue Parkinson	E&DA Rep
Berni Whittaker	LAA project team
Joanna Tait	Bishop Auckland College
Ken Jarrold	CDEP Chair
Rob Strachan	GONE
Will Haywood	ONE
Nick James	LSC

Apologies

Jim Darlington	GONE
James Usher	Teesdale District Council
Andy Palmer	Sedgefield Borough Council
Tom Warburton	ONE

LAA Skills Level Research

Nick explained that the purpose of the research was to provide a district by district comparative perspective. The findings will inform the LAA economy block, although they will also be useful in terms of wider information gathering and sharing.

IFF carried out a sample of telephone interviews to gather the necessary information. Key findings in terms of district by district comparison included Durham City is top for those in education, Easington ranked lowest. For NEETs, Easington has most and Durham City has least. Durham also has the least people without any qualifications, Sedgefield has the most.

The key conclusions are that;

1. A high proportion of people (81%) in County Durham have at least an NVQ Level 2. This is a result of recent National policies which have been successful at providing free learning, although doubts remain about the extent of the economic benefits of this.
2. The 55-65 age group are the least likely to have an NVQ2
3. Many of those with 'no qualifications' are not culturally ready to access learning.

Joanna Tait welcomed the report on behalf of the FE sector, she agreed that the key issue was that we have succeeded in increasing L2 achievement but that the wider issues in relation to skills and economic contribution have not been addressed.

Sue Parkinson asked if there was any possibility of extrapolating the data to get a future trajectory of performance. IFF said this has not yet been done but this would be relatively straightforward to do. Nick James reported that the data would be collected again in 2009 to form a picture of performance over time.

Elaine Richardson raised JCP experience that motivating a persistent pocket of workless clients was the main difficulty.

Bob Ward asked how the research can inform the emerging CDES. Nick responded that investment could be targeted at hard to reach groups, or that specific interventions could be targeted at the 55-65 age group (or paradoxically the research could be used to support targeting investment elsewhere, on the basis that investment is better spent where we can get most success).

Bob said the key question was whether the 55-65 age worklessness group was increasing or decreasing, and that more information was required on this and on future employer demand. Joanna Tait echoed this point.

John McCreadie asked how confident IFF was that the higher than previously reported L2+ figures were accurate. (Previous Labour Force Survey findings show 71% qualified to Level 2; new IFF research shows 81%) IFF expressed confidence in the findings, and stated there is a 1.5% error margin in the figures. It was agreed that the L&S working group take this work forward to inform how the CDES develops in relation to skills.

Summary of LEGI Research – Richard Prisk

Richard gave a presentation and circulated a handout to the group (copy attached). It was emphasised that the research consisted of 12 separate pieces of work and that the findings are a broad summary, but a more detailed examination is necessary to gain an understanding of the findings.

The following discussion took place:

Sue Parkinson welcomed the research and felt there was a good mixture that was different – she noted the franchise work as very exciting. Tarryn Lloyd Payne agreed and felt that if this can work in the LEGI areas, then it can be translated into the rest of the areas in the County.

Linda Edworthy asked for clarification for funding into the enterprise education area. Richard informed her they would be investing £500k over the next 18 months to work primarily with secondary schools and only a few primary schools. Joanna Tait questioned why there was no mention of colleges and noted a national enterprise education programme for colleges was currently underway. Richard responded saying he did not know if colleges would be funded by LEGI or through skills development.

Overall the research has made the LEGI board confident that if improvements can be made to the accessibility of business support provision, it will be successful in delivering change in County Durham.

LAA VAT Registration Research – John McCreadie, EKOS

John McCreadie gave a presentation on the LAA VAT registration research report as circulated prior to the meeting. A discussion took place around procurement in the public sector which is one of the recommendations in the report in order to both increase the total number of VAT registrations and to improve the competitiveness of these businesses. Rob Strachan noted that there would be a focus in the upcoming Comprehensive Spending Review on procurement in the public sector. Bob Ward noted that this recommendation needed to be discussed at a strategic level and therefore it was proposed it should go to the Board.

BSN Evaluation – John McCreadie, EKOS

John gave a presentation on this report as circulated previous to the meeting. Linda Edworthy noted she was disappointed to hear that the research had identified that BSN had had little impact on the economy. John responded stating that although this was the case, it had made an impact on self-employed people and small businesses.

Conclusions

The group agreed that the presentations had been very useful and agreed that next steps needed to be taken:

- The secretariat should email all the Presentations to the SAP with the minutes.
- The relevant working groups should consider the main findings of each report, as follows;
 - Learning and Skills Working Group- LAA Skills Level Research

- Business and Enterprise Working Group- LEGI Research, LAA VAT Registration Research and the BSN evaluation
- LAA Economy Group should also be charged with considering the LAA VAT Registration Research and Skills Level Research.

-After the working groups have considered each report, and a joint report to be prepared and presented to the CDEP Board in July.